



Statement by Ms. Nicole Ameline, Chairperson of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) at the fifty-eighth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)

Chairperson,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

In my capacity as Chairperson of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, I am honoured to address you today. You are all ardent supporters of peace, security and development. You all play an eminent role in your national governments or in the leadership of international governmental or non-governmental organizations, and you all represent the diversity of cultures and experiences that is necessary to find the right balance for this world. By strengthening legislative and normative frameworks, establishing effective mechanisms and alerting against discriminatory stereotypes on the roles of women and men in the family and in society, you have contributed to bringing women's fundamental rights to the fore of public conscience and awareness.

I wish to wholeheartedly express our respect and recognition for this. However, together we must go beyond what we have achieved so far. This is not the time for recalling numbers and statistics that testify to a still unacceptable reality. But at a time when we all have to rethink the notion of progress, equality between women and men becomes an ever more imperative requirement for sustainable development. Can we as humanity continue on the same path if women are still denied the effective recognition and enjoyment of their rights? And what is the purpose of development if it were not to serve the cause of equal rights and opportunities? In fact, there is no sustainable development without respect for fundamental rights. The time has therefore come to deliver on the promise of effective and substantive equality, which can only be achieved through respect for the rule of law and the elimination of discrimination. The CEDAW Convention provides a legitimate basis for these efforts, being the only internationally legally binding treaty on women's rights with near universal ratification.

Significant progress has been made in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. However, while MDG 3 explicitly aimed to promote gender equality and empower women, the MDGs did not embrace a full vision of gender equality and empowerment of women, as enshrined in the Convention, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for action, and the Millennium Declaration. The Committee therefore welcomes the opportunity offered by the post-2015 agenda to embrace a new paradigm that builds on the gaps and lessons of the MDGs and that truly aims to promote women's rights and eliminate discrimination against women.

At its 57th session in February this year, the Committee adopted a statement on “The Post-2015 Development Agenda and the Elimination of Discrimination against

Women”. In the statement, the Committee calls for a human rights-based approach in the post-2015 agenda, which should be grounded in the existing international human rights framework. Anchoring the post-2015 agenda in human rights norms, in particular the CEDAW Convention, will ensure that development is not a matter of policy choices of States, but in fact a matter of human rights obligations.

Let us be clear that sustainable development cannot be achieved without realizing women’s rights and gender equality. Women must be crucial drivers of socio-economic progress, peace and stability. And yet, discrimination and violence against women, their exclusion from decision-making processes and women’s limited access to productive resources continue to hamper development worldwide.

Therefore, the CEDAW Committee supports the call for a stand-alone goal on gender equality and women’s empowerment in the post-2015 agenda to underline the centrality of women’s rights to future development gains through seeking not only formal equality, but also substantive equality. In addition, a commitment to the human rights of women and non-discrimination more broadly should be mainstreamed throughout all goals, to ensure that the new agenda does not exclude those facing discrimination, or worse, that it deepens existing inequalities. Together with discrimination on the basis of sex, all grounds of discrimination prohibited by international human rights law must be addressed in this process, as women regularly face intersecting forms of discrimination.

Chairperson,

As I have emphasized in my intervention before the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals in February this year, integrating women’s rights and

gender equality into the post-2015 agenda means that targets should be universal to ensure that no woman is left behind. In addition, specific consideration should be given to indicators that capture situations that are predominantly experienced by women and girls such as sex-disaggregated indicators related to sexual and gender-based violence, sexual and reproductive health and rights, maternity and family leave policies, forced and child marriages, and education.

In the concrete formulation of a stand-alone goal on gender equality and women's empowerment, the devil is once more in the detail. The Committee is therefore planning to convene two expert meetings, one in Geneva and another one in New York during the 69th session of the General Assembly, which will help to consolidate the elements of a gender equality goal that is based on the existing human rights framework with the CEDAW Convention at its heart. We will certainly aim to provide our contribution to the formulation of a gender equality goal in close coordination with UN Women. At this point, I would like to thank UN Women for its continuous and effective support to our Committee, in particular for the elaboration of our general recommendations. It is our wish is to strengthen our partnership with UN Women and to embark on a mutually reinforcing process of coordination with regard to both the implementation of the CEDAW Convention as well as the post-2015 development goals.

As a contribution to the post-2015 and ICPD Beyond 2014 processes, the Committee recently adopted statements on the post-2015 development agenda and on women's sexual and reproductive health and rights. In addition, the Committee has embarked on the elaboration of general recommendations on access to justice; rural women; harmful practices (jointly with the CRC); gender-related dimensions of asylum, refugee status and statelessness; gender equality in the context of climate

change and natural disasters; and women's and girls' right to education. With the support and substantive contributions from its partners, the Committee was able to convene two general discussions in 2013, one on access to justice and one on rural women. Both events were attended by a large number of Member States, UN entities and agencies, non-governmental organizations and experts from academia.

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If we are to tackle the multiple challenges ahead of us, we must join our efforts in addressing them. Let me take the example of women, peace and security. On 18 October 2013, the very same day that the Security Council held its open debate on women, peace and security, our Committee adopted general recommendation No. 30 (2013) on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations. The general recommendation stresses the importance of women's involvement in conflict prevention, resolution and peacebuilding, which are essential preconditions of for development in post-conflict settings. The general recommendation has been of great use to the Committee when adopting its recent concluding observations on Iraq and Sierra Leone and will inform its dialogues with countries such as Syria and the Central African Republic which will be reviewed by the Committee in July this year. In their remarks to the Security Council on 18 October, the Secretary-General, the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Executive Director of UN Women all hailed the adoption of General Recommendation No. 30.

Not satisfied to wait for the submission of a case or report in the face of emerging developments, the Committee issued a statement in 2013 on the role of

women in the process of political transition in Egypt, Libya and Tunisia, and we have already witnessed significant progress in some countries of the region.

Chairperson,

CEDAW has always been a pioneer in fighting violence against women, including domestic and sexual violence. The Convention comprehensively covers all forms of discrimination against women, including gender-based violence, as defined in CEDAW's General Recommendation No. 19 (1992) on violence against women. Combatting violence against women is a cross-cutting theme in CEDAW's concluding observations and in its case-law under the Optional Protocol to the Convention.

During the last year, the Committee adopted inadmissibility decisions on six cases and Views finding violations in two cases, one concerning rape and one relating to discriminatory legislation on maternity benefits. In addition, the Committee adopted findings, comments and recommendations in relation to one inquiry and undertook a country visit in relation to another inquiry.

The Committee benefitted from its constructive dialogues with 22 States parties over the last year to provide guidance to States parties on how to better implement their legal obligations under the Convention. These recommendations can be a powerful tool for development, if they are integrated in national development policies, international assistance, UNDAFs and operational activities on the ground.

The Committee continues to take the lead in the development and implementation of more effective and cost-efficient working methods. But we must go further in the simplification and rationalization of our working methods in order to

make our dialogues with States parties more effective. In addition to an ever closer cooperation with our partners and maximizing the use of new technologies, such as videoconferencing, webcasting of our dialogues and the use of IT-based training and implementation tools, it is of utmost importance that we strengthen the capacity of States parties to prepare their periodic reports to the Committee and to implement our recommendations at the national level. We are resolved to pursue these efforts, while acknowledging that we are facing limitations in terms of allocation of meeting time as well as human and financial resources.

Chairperson,

This is precisely why the CEDAW Committee has strongly supported the treaty body strengthening process. We are hopeful that the outcome document on strengthening and enhancing the effective functioning of the human rights treaty body system, which was agreed upon by Member States in the intergovernmental process here in New York last month, will help the Committee to address the serious challenges faced by the entire human rights treaty body system. With the important number of human rights treaties and treaty bodies that already exist, along with a similar growth in States parties to the treaties, the treaty body system is facing a significant backlog of State party reports and individual complaints, chronic under-resourcing, and the fact that many States parties do not report on time and some do not report at all.

The outcome document thus proposes the granting of more meeting time and human and financial resources from the regular budget to the treaty bodies. It also provides for capacity building to assist States parties comply with their reporting obligations and for important cost-saving measures through reduced documentation and working languages.

With so much at stake, the CEDAW Committee sincerely hopes that the outcome document will receive the support of Member States as it is further considered in the General Assembly in the coming weeks.

Chairperson,
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Ladies and gentlemen,

Before concluding, let me express the Committee's gratitude to all partners, including other treaty bodies and human rights mechanisms, the United Nations and its specialized agencies, Member States, NGOs, national human rights institutions and many other actors. The support and information received from these partners are crucial for the Committee to gain a clear view of the situation of women's rights around the globe. In addition to our substantive Secretariat at OHCHR, I would especially like to thank IWRAW-Asia Pacific and United Nations country teams, particularly the Interagency Group on CEDAW reporting (comprising UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, FAO and UN Women). We are also grateful to UNHCR, ILO, UNESCO and IPU for their support.

Let me conclude by recalling that women in all societies enrich humanity and contribute to building a more just and peaceful global society, thereby striving towards true integral humanism that had always been the vision of Léopold Sédar Senghor.

I thank you for this opportunity.
